

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

Civil. No.: 1:25-cv-434

31 FIREARMS, AMMUNITION,
MAGAZINES, AND EQUIPMENT.

Defendants-in-rem.

VERIFIED COMPLAINT FOR FORFEITURE *IN REM*

Plaintiff, United States, brings this complaint in accordance with Supplemental Rule G(2) of the Supplemental Rules for Certain Admiralty or Maritime Claims and Asset Forfeiture Actions, and alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1) This is a civil action to forfeit and condemn to the use and benefit of the United States of America property involved in violations of the 18 U.S.C. § 922(a)(1) and 19 U.S.C. § 1595a that is subject to forfeiture pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 924(d)(1) and 19 U.S.C. § 1595a(d).

DEFENDANTS *IN REM*

2) The defendants *in rem* consist of the following:

See attached Exhibit 1.

(Hereafter referred to as “Defendant Property”),

3) The Defendant Property was seized by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on February 8, 2022, in the District of New Mexico.

4) The Defendant Property is now, and during the pendency of this action will be, in the jurisdiction of this Court.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

5) The United States District Court for the District of New Mexico has subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1345, 1355(a) and 1356.

6) Venue for this civil forfeiture action is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1355 and 1395, as acts or omissions giving rise to the forfeiture took place in this district and the property is found in this district. Upon the filing of this complaint, the Defendant Property will be arrested by execution of a Warrant for Arrest *In Rem* in the District of New Mexico.

FACTS

7) On February 8, 2022, a Las Cruces/Dona Ana (LCDC) Metro Narcotics Interdiction Agent conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle near I-25 at mile marker 9 in Dona Ana County, New Mexico. The vehicle was a 2018 Honda Sonata bearing a Texas license plate number PTL1000, registered to Paulo Javier Perez Ibarra. The driver of the Honda was Jose Alfredo Corona III, who presented an Illinois driver's license.

8) During the Metro Narcotics Agent's traffic-stop investigation with Corona numerous criminal indicators and deceptions were observed including, but not limited to, not making eye contact during conversations, leaning on the hood-of the patrol vehicle, and having sweaty palms. Corona was asked to present his driver's license, insurance, and registration. Corona went through the paperwork in vehicle and placed the registration paperwork on the passenger seat. The Metro Narcotics Agent observed air fresheners on the dashboard, air vents, the rear-view mirror, and a single key in the ignition. During conversation, Corona was acting nervously and started talking without being asked any questions about the weather and how bad the weather was in his hometown. Corona told the Metro Narcotics Agent that he was on vacation and flew from Chicago, Illinois, to Guadalajara, Mexico. Corona then said he went to Cancun, Mexico, flew to Chihuahua,

Mexico, and then rode a bus to Juarez, Mexico, on February 4, 2022, where he crossed into the United States via a pedestrian entrance and stayed with his family in El Paso, Texas.

9) The Metro Narcotics Agent advised Corona that law enforcement would be applying for a state search warrant for the Honda and that Corona was free to leave, at which point Corona walked away from the scene and the car. Before Corona left, the Metro Narcotics Agent requested and received a contact phone number from Corona. A New Mexico State Police (NMSP) K9 Officer arrived on scene and deployed his trained and certified drug odor detection canine. The canine alerted positively to the Honda for the odor of illegal controlled substance.

10) A Third Judicial District Court state search warrant was obtained and executed on the Honda. Officers located a backpack in the backseat that contained an empty 50 caliber magazine. In the trunk, Officers discovered 31 firearms, \$10,000 in U.S. currency in a Ziploc bag rubber banded together in approximately \$1,000 increments, ammunition, multiple magazines and equipment. The firearms, magazines, and ammunition were wrapped in items to include saran wrap, black trash bags, blue shop towels and masking tape. The firearms were removed from the car and documented for evidence purposes. Located in Corona's wallet left inside the vehicle was Mexican currency.

11) Based on his training and experience, the wrapping, the concealment, and method of transportation, SA Larson believes that the currency and Defendant Property were going to be smuggled into Mexico. Contrary to his statement, Corona did not cross at a pedestrian entrance from Mexico to the United States. Instead, Corona drove the Honda across the border on February 4, 2022, four days before the Metro Narcotics officer stopped him on the highway. During the traffic stop, Corona was unable to provide the name of the

destination city in Texas to which he claimed to be traveling. The highway where Corona was stopped leads back to the next Mexico border crossing.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF

12) The United States incorporates by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 11 as though fully set forth.

13) 18 U.S.C. § 924(d)(1) subjects to forfeiture any firearm or ammunition involved in or used in any knowing violation of section 922(a)(1).

14) 18 U.S.C. § 922(a)(1) prohibits any person except a licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer from dealing in firearms or transporting firearms and ammunition in interstate or foreign commerce.

15) Defendants Firearms and Ammunition are subject to arrest and forfeiture to plaintiff under 18 U.S.C. § 924(d)(1) because the firearms and ammunition were involved in or used in knowing violation of 18 U.S.C. § 922(a)(1).

SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF

16) The United States incorporates by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 11 as though fully set forth.

17) 19 U.S.C. § 1595(a)(d) provides in pertinent part: “Merchandise exported or sent from the United States or attempted to be exported or sent from the United States contrary to law... shall be seized and forfeited to the United States.

18) Defendant Property is subject to forfeiture to the United States under 19 U.S.C. § 1595a(d) because Jose Corona attempted to export or send the Defendant Property from the United States contrary to law.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff seeks arrest of Defendant Property and forfeiture of same to Plaintiff, determination of the validity and priority of claims of the Claimants and any Unknown

Claimants to the Defendant Property, costs and expenses of seizure and of this proceeding, and other proper relief.

Respectfully submitted,

RYAN ELLISON
United States Attorney

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen R. Kotz", is written over a horizontal line.

STEPHEN R. KOTZ
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28 U.S.C. § 1746 DECLARATION

I am a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) who has read the contents of the Complaint for Forfeiture *In Rem* to which this Declaration is attached; and the statements contained in the complaint are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I declare under penalty of perjury and the laws of the United States of America that this Declaration is true and correct, except as to matters stated on information and belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true.

Dated: 5/6/2025

Gavin Larsen
Gavin Larsen, Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation

EXHIBIT 1 TO COMPLAINT FOR FORFEITURE

**FIREARMS, AMMUNITION, MAGAZINES AND
EQUIPMENT SEIZED ON 02/08/2022**

1. (5) rounds of .50 Caliber ammunition (1B1).
2. (4) rounds of 9mm Caliber ammunition (1B2).
3. (350) rounds of 7.62 Caliber ammunition (1B3).
4. .50 caliber cleaning system (1B4).
5. (25) rounds of 12-gauge shells (1B5).
6. .50 caliber cleaning system (1B6).
7. IOR Bucuresti rifle scope (1B7).
8. (2) Gun Boxes (1B8).
9. M&P Smith and Wesson, Model M&P 2.0, 9mm Pistol, S/N: NJH8250 (1B9) (T20220083950).
10. Glock 17, 9mm, S/N: BFEB302 (1B10) (T20220083967).
11. Draco AK, 7.62x39 caliber, S/N: ROA21DG3008 (1B11) (T20220084087).
12. Aero Precision X15, 5.56 caliber, S/N: AR77902 (1B12) (T20220084018).
13. Glock 17, 9mm, S/N: ZYP512 (1B13) (T20220084012).
14. Springfield Armory XDm-9, 9mm, S/N: MG479652 (1B14) (T20220083924).
15. Glock 27, .40 Caliber, S/N: BGBX772 (1B15) (T20220084003).
16. Glock 22, .40 Caliber, S/N: LEW257 (1B16) (T20220083922).
17. M&P Smith & Wesson, 9mm, S/N: Obliterated (1B17) (T20220083961).
18. Glock 19x, 9mm, S/N: BPTA062 (1B18) (T20220083931).
19. Springfield XDm-40, .40 Caliber, S/N: MG294935 (1B19) (T20220083956).
20. Barrett, Model: 82A1, .50 Caliber, S/N: 23963 (1B20) (T20220084016).
21. Glock 17, 9mm, S/N: Obliterated (1B21) (T20220083947).
22. Glock 22, .40 Caliber, S/N: AFZG194 (1B22) (T20220083995).
23. Glock 17, 9mm, S/N: AAS531 (1B23) (T20220083999).
24. Glock 19, 9mm, S/N: BVBZ902 (1B24) (T20240497910).
25. Glock 19, 9mm, S/N: GCA159 (1B25) (T20220083997).
26. Taurus G2c, 9mm, S/N: TLP36455 (1B26) (T20220083941).
27. Glock 23, 40 Caliber, S/N: BRRP951 (1B27) (T20220083988).
28. Smith & Wesson, Shield Plus, 9mm S/N: JFZ2634 (1B28) (T20240497916).
29. Smith & Wesson, Model: 5906, 9mm S/N: TDE3395 (1B29) (T20220083987).
30. Anderson Manufacturing AM-15, 5.56 Caliber, S/N: 20350633 (1B30) (T20220084082).
31. Micro Drako AK, 7.62x39 cal, S/N: PMD-22916-20ROA (1B31) (T20220084079).
32. Sota Arms, SA15, 5.56 Caliber, S/N: 007516 (1B32) (T20220084104).
33. Palmetto State Armory, PSAK-S, 7.62x39 caliber, S/N: AKS000649 (1B33) (T20220084070).
34. SKAR, Model: 175, 7.62x51 caliber, S/N: H1C10748 (1B34) (T20220084060).
35. American Tactical Omni Hybrid AR, 5.56 Caliber, S/N: NS265213 (1B35) (T20240497925).
36. Zastava Arms AK, Model: ZPAPM70, 7.62x39 caliber, S/N: Z70-121228 (1B36) (T20220084101).
37. Stevens 320, 12-gauge, S/N: 169387B (1B37) (T20220084076).

- 38. Barrett, Model: 95, 50 Caliber, S/N: AB000455 (1B38) (T20220084055).
- 39. Barrett .50 Caliber stand (1B39).
- 40. Black plastic holster (1B40).
- 41. Dickinson Ranger BP, 12-gauge, S/N: 218014623 (1B41) (T20220084065).
- 42. (60) Empty magazines (1B42).
- 43. Night Force NX5 Scope (1B43).
- 44. Barrett optics dence (1B44).
- 45. BSA sweet 22 scope (1B45).
- 46. Black sling (1B46).
- 47. Wolverine CSR Optic (1B47).